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*Wesley and Methodism.* By F. J. SNELL, M.A. Oxon. [“The World’s Epoch-Makers.”] (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. 1900. Pp. x, 244.)

THIS volume is a short, readable biography which portrays some of the prominent features of John Wesley’s life and work in orderly arrangement. Some of the biographies of great men which have been published recently are too bulky. This sketch of Wesley’s life is, on the other hand, somewhat too restricted. A fulness of impression such as the magnitude of the subject might lead one to expect can scarcely be gained in the limitations of this neat volume. After reading such estimates as Green, Augustine Birrell, and many other historians and critics have written of the era of the Wesleyan revival in the eighteenth century, one cannot easily rid himself of the conviction that the movement begun by the Wesleys was nothing less than a tidal wave in religious history. The story of John Wesley and Methodism is remarkable. In dramatic power, in variety of situation, in the play of the deeper sentiments and passions of a moral life upon a broad arena, in the signal effects produced upon an entire nation and its subsequent history, the tale is not only far beyond any mere romance in value, but it has a vital interest which no imaginative work could carry. There is breadth enough in the management of details of this life of Wesley to give the reader a clear view of the state of the times through which Wesley lived and labored for the regeneration of England. The degeneracy of the established church; the worldliness of its clergy; the low standard of morals at the royal court, in high life and among the poor; the great hunger for better things throughout England—evidenced by the crowds which the field-preaching gathered in every part of the kingdom from Cornwall to Scotland; the hostilities which broke out in many of these multitudinous gatherings, the mobbing, the insults, the persecution, all of which were simply the violence and rending of the demons of English life as they, many of them, met the time of exorcism; all this is sketched with spirit and brevity.

Some unnecessary flings are here and there embodied in a single phrase; as, for example, in recounting Wesley’s rescue in childhood from his father’s burning house, this author says: “When, in later life, Wesley became *saturated with the idea of hell*, he looked back to this incident as emblematical of another conflagration and another escape.” This implication of such “saturation” is a wrong against the man who for more than fifty years, in thousands of sermons, preached the unbounded, everlasting love of God with apostolic fervor.

Some over-emphasizing of the eccentricities of Wesley are apparent in this narrative, partly because the qualities of his greatness are not raised to the prominence which they deserve. It is true that Wesley believed in ghosts and witches; but so did many other men in that age who were men of weight and learning. Such facts, however, must be construed by the general mood of those times, and not be taken too seriously by critics of a later era. Wesley had some unfortunate expe-

riences in *affaires du cœur*; but other great men, long before and even since Socrates, have behaved awkwardly in seeking for a wife, and have even been unfortunately mated.

The Wesleys had many instances in their revival services of persons who acted like the demoniacs of Christ's day, as they passed through the experience of conversion—violent physical agitation, prostration, outcries, imprecations, and finally the emerging of a cleansed and pacified moral life. But these revival phenomena were less the effect of sensational preaching than they were the symptoms of that strangely pathological condition of moral life in England which was too weak to do more than to stagger into an apprehension of the Gospel of Righteousness when it was proclaimed in strong but simple terms.

WILLIAM EDWARDS HUNTINGTON.

*Etudes sur l'Histoire Économique de la France (1760-1789).* Par CAMILLE BLOCH. Preface de M. ÉMILE LEVASSEUR. (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils. 1900. Pp. ix, 269.)

THIS volume contains several essays on distinct phases of the old régime in France such as the municipal assemblies of 1787, the *cahiers*, the treaty of commerce of 1786. The most noteworthy of them are those on "Le Commerce des Grains dans la Généralité d'Orléans" and "La Répartition de la Propriété Foncière à la veille de la Révolution dans quelques paroisses de la Généralité d'Orléans." The latter touches the question of the amount of land owned by the peasantry, a subject on which opinion is still seriously divided. It would be difficult to answer such a question on the basis of an investigation of so narrow a field as the *généralité* of Orleans, and yet the state of affairs which M. Bloch has discovered in Orleans is doubly interesting because of its relation to the larger problem.

M. Bloch has drawn his inferences from the rolls for the *vingtièmes* in fifteen typical parishes. Although the returns are not in all cases complete or reliable he regards them as better than the returns for the *taille*, and as sufficiently trustworthy considering the scope of his inquiry. The statistical tables with which he supplements his treatment of the subject render his investigation useful in examining features of it to which he does not call special attention. He is interested in the holdings of the peasants rather than in the amount of land possessed by the Third Estate as a whole. His tables answer nearly all the questions one would like to ask, but they do not indicate the number of peasants who owned no land, because the returns include only the proprietors. Some of the figures are unusually instructive. Out of 35,707 arpents in the fifteen parishes the peasants held 15,947, the peasants and the bourgeois together, 22,828. In three parishes the peasants held more than the bourgeois, nobles, and ecclesiastics put together: in eight they held more than the nobles. M. Bloch finds that the peasant holdings were generally small; the three sets of proprietors with which they are compared held from one and one-half to forty times as much per individual.